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Ismaili constitution pdf

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Ismailism has endured due to its inherent flexibility, which is in contrast to our way of life that values adaptability and spontaneity. Our system of governance has never been rigid or prescriptive, even the so-called Holy Laws are more of guidelines for methodology rather than detailed directives for achieving specific outcomes. A new constitution was ordained on December 10, 1986, which will be known as "The Constitution of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims". This document aims to unite all members of the Jamat worldwide through a single framework, linking them directly to the Imam regardless of geographical location. Our Tariqah has always prioritized spiritual growth and enhancing the quality of life for its members. As the Imam of the Time, I have focused on both personal development and community improvement throughout history. In recent times, new councils have been established while others have been discontinued in light of demographic changes within the Jamat. The newly crafted constitutional structure takes into account emerging global trends, such as increasing international involvement and a desire for the Jamat to play an even more prominent role in its host societies. The world recognizes today that times are significant forces shaping national and international progress. Over several decades, I have established institutions with global reach, focusing on solving key development challenges in health, education, and rural development through the Aga Khan Foundation. Furthermore, the Aga Khan University aims to be a premier centre for higher learning, providing high standards of education and demonstrating excellence globally. The Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development supports economic growth across various countries. The establishment of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, which is expected to formalize its role within the coming months, will promote and support Islamic culture worldwide. I firmly believe that the Ismaili Constitution provides a strong framework through which our Jamat can contribute harmoniously to the development of the Ummah and societies where we reside. The progress achieved by our institutions is largely due to the support from our volunteers. This tradition of voluntary service is one of our most cherished and noble customs, and I desire that it be maintained and reinforced. At the same time, there is a continuous need for professionalization and enlightened leadership in all our activities. To address this need, I have been committed over several years to identifying, fostering, and encouraging leadership potential within the Jamat to serve effectively. It's my hope that the Ismaili Constitution will enable My spiritual children to take an active role in institution building, apply their abilities creatively, pursue personal development, and achieve intellectual and spiritual fulfillment. The Ismaili Constitution acknowledges many of the current needs of the Jamat, but some adjustments may be necessary as we move forward. I aim for a harmonious integration by adapting our Ismaili Constitution to accommodate unique circumstances. To achieve this, I will be making adjustments on a case-by-case basis through the Rules and Regulations specific to each country. My desire is to have new appointments for councils and institutions made under the Ismaili Constitution, and I have already issued directives to that effect. Until these changes take place, office bearers under the current constitutions will continue in their roles. I am confident that our Ismaili Constitution will foster a stronger sense of unity and identity among our global Jamat, leading to greater peace, security, and well-being if we abide by it sincerely. On this joyous occasion, I extend my warmest blessings and loving paternal maternal wishes to all the beloved spiritual children of our Canadian Jamat. You are all deeply in my heart, thoughts, and prayers. AGA KHAN The new Constitution serves as an enabling document for the Jamat, allowing it to establish new organizations tailored to its needs. As leaders, your primary duty is to ensure these bodies function in the best interest and benefit of the Jamat. The Constitution was designed with the Jamat's well-being in mind, aiming to address its needs effectively. It provides access to specialized services, such as the Arbitration and Conciliation Board, which resolves disputes in a fair and timely manner without unnecessary cost. Similarly, the Tariqah and Religious Education Board oversees the spiritual growth of young members under the guidance of the Imam of the Time. Each body has a distinct purpose, and it is essential to understand and share these objectives to effectively serve the Jamat. However, written constitutions like this one are inherently imperfect, as they cannot keep pace with changing societal needs. Therefore, Jamat leaders must continuously adapt and update their constitutional framework to remain relevant. To ensure that the Constitution effectively serves the Jamat's needs, I encourage leaders to share their concerns and problems with the National Council and ultimately, with me. As the Imam of the Time, my responsibility is to guide the Jamat according to its needs. Therefore, it is essential for leaders to discuss any issues they may have in implementing the Constitution and seek solutions together. **Embracing Democracy with Pluralism and Ethics: A Call to Action for Ismaili Muslims** The Aga Khan champions democracy, rooted in the Quran's Tawil & Talim, emphasizing ethics and pluralism. For Ismaili Muslims, this vision is enshrined in their constitution, supported by Firmans - divine guidance from Imams. However, the dissemination of these principles has been hindered by bureaucratic groups with a top-down hierarchy, stifling community engagement. **Silence Perpetuates Status Quo** If members remain silent, change will elude the community. Those controlling resources and constitutional positions will continue unchecked, unaccountable, and with impunity. This contradicts Hazar Imam's plea on July 11, 2018, to "Be His Dais" (** *), emphasizing collective responsibility. **The Danger of Inaction** When good people stay quiet, bad actions thrive. Bullies and dictators exploit this silence, perpetuating harm with impunity. Ismaili Muslim leaders and volunteers are appointed to serve the community under the constitution, not to wield power or protect incompetence, but to address the needs of those they serve. **Serving with Accountability** As Hazar Imam emphasizes, leaders have a duty to serve, not hide corruption or abuse power. Unfortunately, absolute power often corrupts, damaging the Jamaat. Related Farmans highlight the importance of: * Coordinated efforts between institutions * Achieving reasonable objectives to effectively serve the Jamat and surrounding communities * Careful planning, identifying needs, effective performance, accountability, and transparent correction of failures **Whose Needs Are Being Fulfilled?** Always remember, are the needs being met for personal gain or for those being served? This self-reflection is crucial in upholding the principles of democracy, ethics, and pluralism advocated by the Aga Khan. ***Key Quotes from Hazar Imam:*** * "Be His Dais" (** *) * Leaders and volunteers serve to address community needs, not to protect incompetence or abuse power. * Absolute power corrupts, damaging the Jamaat; institutions must prioritize careful planning, accountability, and transparency. Accountability is crucial, and we must be accountable at all times to the organizations and people we serve. Firman stresses the importance of accountability in an interview. Furthermore, he clarifies that the "Imam of the time" refers not to a constitutional entity but rather the divine light or Noor of Ali and Allah. This Noor is invoked by Ismaili Muslims in their prayers as various titles such as Mawlana, Shah Karim Al Hussieni, Aga, Saheb ul Zaman, and others. When studying the Ismaili Constitution, it is essential to keep in mind that: 1. The constitution was ordained by the Imam for the governance of the community, primarily benefiting the community. 2. The Imam's divine authority is separate from the constitution and governance under it. 3. Imams' guidance comes from their interpretation of the Quran, as given in Farmans, which include the constitution. The Ismaili Constitution of 1986 was replaced by a new one promulgated in Lisbon in 1998. However, this earlier document remains important for historical purposes, as Ismaili institutions continued to reference it until the 2010s. Many countries don't allow external constitutions, even if they're based on religion or culture, to govern their citizens. However, they do recognize international agreements that they've signed, like UNO, ICJ, or WTO. Similarly, the Ismaili Constitution respects local laws and is recognized in Portugal, where the global headquarters of the Ismaili Imamat are located. The Ismaili Muslim constitution is meant for community governance and should be freely given to all members, along with Farmans (directions) from the Imam. Unfortunately, full copies or access to these documents aren't readily available online or provided to community members, despite repeated requests and instructions from Imam Aga Khan. Some parts of the Constitution are available on certain websites, but a complete copy remains elusive. Just like many countries don't automatically recognize other countries' constitutions, even if they're based on religion, the Ismaili Constitution's recognition is limited to specific jurisdictions. It respects local laws and regulations, and entities like AKF, IIS, or AKDN are registered in their respective countries and follow national constitutional rules. The Ismaili Muslim constitution is intended to govern the community and be made freely available to all its members. However, despite repeated requests, members have not been given full access or a copy of the document. Aga Khan's instructions call for inclusive governance and best practices in advancing pluralism. The leadership has blocked access to certain information, including parts of the timeline website and the 101 proofs document. Many Ismailis feel that the top conservative leadership is unwilling to educate its members about fundamental aspects of Islam and Ismailism, resulting in thousands of young people leaving the faith in countries such as Pakistan, India, the US, Canada, and Europe. and Europe have severed ties with Ismailism altogether. This information is readily available on YouTube. Firstly, do not rely solely on what you see on YouTube, especially when it comes to individuals creating multiple anti-Ismaili accounts across social media platforms. These individuals crave attention and will post more frequently as a result. Ignore them. Secondly, if some have abandoned Ismailism, it is not due to a lack of understanding the Constitution, which has allowed Ismailism to survive for centuries even without its official publication. The true distinction between an Ismaili and non-Ismaili lies in one's faith in the Imam, not the Constitution itself. Our Imam prioritizes the light within an individual's heart over the number of followers. If one's devotion to the Imam is lacking, it is better for them to vacate their position and allow genuine Ismailis to take their place. This is a loss for them, not Ismailism as a whole. Moreover, the debate is built on flawed premises, with the Ismaili Constitution readily available through online searches since its publication decades ago. Personally, I obtained a copy over 35 years ago from Jamatkhana, and several others have followed suit. The institutions' commentary on the constitution was requested before it was finalized, and many members, including myself, have signed sworn affidavits to defend the Ismaili Constitution during new appointments. The Nizari Ismaili community received valuable directives from the first two Aga Khans between 1850 and 1891. This paper delves into these Farmans, discussing their historical and theological importance as well as the challenges in preserving them. The author explores the role of Imams, Pirs, and authorized representatives in delivering these sacred pronouncements, which played a crucial part in guiding the community's spiritual and material life. The study draws from various manuscripts, archives, and personal collections to provide insight into the significance of Farmans within Ismaili literature and their authority within the community. Additionally, it highlights the importance of future research and cataloging efforts to uncover additional Farmans that have been lost over time.